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May 2, 2014

Chairman Tom Wheeler
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

ACCEPTED/FILED

MAY 8 - 2014

Federal Communications Commission
Office of the Secretary

WC: 13-184

Re: Modernization of E-Rate

Dear Chairman Wheeler,

On behalf of the National League of Cities (NLC), I am writing to urge the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to take swift action to strengthen and modernize the E-Rate program to ensure that schools and libraries have access to robust Internet services.

The availability and adoption of quality broadband service can vary dramatically from one neighborhood to another, even in heavily populated urban areas. As you know well, the lack of broadband severely impacts an individual's access to information, education and tools for economic independence. For many in this situation, schools and libraries can be a great equalizer by providing services that help users understand the value of broadband and to develop basic and advanced computer skills to use it to do their homework or apply for a job. This is particularly true when access to broadband or the hardware needed is cost prohibitive for our communities' residents personally.

The E-Rate program has been successful in providing increased access to modern communications networks to our nation's schools and libraries. However, because the program is so oversubscribed, many of our communities' residents are unable to rely on their schools and libraries to get online.

For these reasons, NLC supports increased funding for E-Rate, which is currently capped at \$2.41 billion, to help ensure that urban, suburban, and rural communities have increased opportunities to access resources that will allow their schools and libraries to be connected to the Internet.

Understanding the limited resources many schools and libraries have, NLC also supports streamlining the E-Rate applications process to increase efficiency and effectiveness. NLC also supports the "smart use" of E-Rate funds to deploy high-capacity broadband rather than to support outdated services such as paging, directory assistance, and dial-up services. In addition, it is our belief that any changes to the E-Rate program would support new fiber optic construction that will serve in the medium- and long-run to make schools and libraries more efficient, reduce per-unit fees, and will protect E-Rate funds over time.

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In the early 1990s this country was ranked one of the world's leaders in broadband penetration, but our ranking has fallen, and with that, our ability to provide the tools our residents need to improve their quality of life. Schools and libraries have the potential to support sustained economic growth for our nation's workforce, both present and future. We cannot stand idly by when connecting such vital institutions are so close to our reach and, therefore, urge the FCC to modernize and streamline this critically important program for schools and libraries.

Sincerely,



Clarence E. Anthony
Executive Director
National League of Cities

